

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about swindlers

偽

Pronunciation: *wei* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *ngai* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: false, fake, hypocritical

偽 means false: 偽造 (*wei zao* = false~make = fake), 偽裝 (*wei zhuang* = false~make-up = pretend/camouflage), 虛偽 (*xu wei* = pretense~false = pretentious/insincere).

Antique books/paintings may have 偽本 (*wei ben* = faked~editions/copies). 名牌 (*ming pai* = famous~brand = brand names) hate 偽冒 (*wei mao* = false~imitate = being pirated). 偽造證據 (*wei zao zheng ju* = false~make~proof~basis = faking evidence) is a crime. 偽君子 (*wei jun zi* = false~honorable~man = hypocrites) wear 偽善 (*wei shan* = false~good/kind) masks.

偽 also means unauthentic/illegal/unrecognized. In WWII Japanese invaders supported Wang Zhaoming's 偽政府 (*wei zheng fu* = illegal~administration~building = collaborative government, 1940-45) and Pu Yi's 偽滿洲國 (*wei Man Zhou Guo* = illegal~Manchuria~state = "Manchukuo", 1932-45).

by Diana Yue